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May each year. The following is a description of a Khasi archery meeting, for the details of which I am largely indebted to U Job Solomon. By way of introduction it should be stated that the Khasis opine that arrow-shooting originated at the beginning of creation. The Khasi Eve (*Ka-mei-ka-nong-hukum*) had two sons to whom she taught the toxophilite art, at the same time she warned them never to lose their tempers over the game. At the present day villages have regular archery meetings, the men of one village challenging those of another. There are men on both sides called *nong khan khnam* (lit., he who stops the arrow). This man, by uttering spells, and reciting the shortcomings of the opposite side, is supposed to possess the power of preventing the arrows of the opposing party hitting the mark. These men also, to some extent, may be said to perform the duties of umpires. They may be styled umpires for the sake of convenience in this account. Before the match commences conditions are laid down by the umpires of both sides, such as (*a*) the day on which the contest is to take place; (*b*) the place of the meeting; (*c*) the number of arrows to be shot by each archer; (*d*) the distinguishing marks to be given to the arrows of either side; (*e*) the amounts of the stakes on each side; (*f*) the number of times the competitors are to shoot on the day of the archery meeting, and many other conditions too numerous to mention here. The targets are generally small bundles of grass called "*u skum*," about 1 ft. long by 4 in. in diameter, fastened on a small pole. Sometimes targets are made from the root of a plant called *ka soh pdung*. The distances from the point where the marksmen stand to the targets are some 40 to 50 yards. Each side has its own target, the different targets being placed in a line, and the competitors taking up their positions in a straight line at right angles to the line of fire, and facing the targets; each side in turn then shoots at its own target. Early in the morning of the day fixed for the contest the umpire of each side sits in front of his target with a hollow bamboo full of water in his hand, the bows and arrows being laid on the ground alongside the targets. The umpire then repeats all the conditions of the contest, invokes the aid of the primeval woman (*ka mei ka nong hukum*) aforesaid, goes through

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Khasi of the Uplands to marry a Bhoi or Wár woman, and a disgrace to marry a Lynngam. These divisions are sub-divided into a number of septs, taking Mr. Risley's definition of "sept" as being the largest exogamous division of the tribe. It will, however, be more convenient to speak of these septs as "clans," the word "clan" having been used in other parts of this Monograph and by other writers.

Many of the clans trace their descent from ancestresses or *kiaw* (grandmothers), who are styled *ki Iawbei-Tynrai*, lit. grandmothers of the root (i.e. the root of the tree of the clan). In some of the clans, the name of this ancestress survives; take as instances the Mylliem-ngap and Mylliem-pdah clans of the Khyrim State, the names of the ancestresses of the clans being *ka ngap* (honey, i.e. the sweet one), and *ka pdah* respectively. This tribal ancestress, as will be seen in the paragraph of the monograph dealing with ancestor-worship, is greatly reverenced, in fact, she may almost be said to be deified. The descendants of one ancestress of the clan, *Ka Iawbei Tynrai*, are called *shi kur* or one clan. We then come to the division of the *kpoh* or sub-clan, all the descendants of one great grandmother (*ka Iawbei Tymmen*), being styled *shi kpoh*. The next division is the *iing* (lit. house) or family. It is almost invariably the case that the grandmother, her daughters and the daughter's children, live together under one roof, the grandmother during her life-time being the head of the house. The grandmother is styled *ka Iawbei Khynraw*, or the young grandmother, to distinguish her from the other two grandmothers, *ka Iawbei-tynrai* and *ka Iawbei-tymmen* who have been mentioned above. The young grandmother, her daughters and their children are said to belong to *shi iing*, one house, the word *iing* in this instance possessing amongst the Khasis the same significance as the English word *family*.

We will now see how the Khasi clan (*kur* or *jaid*) grew out of the Khasi family (*iing*). Let us take the example of the great Diengdoh clan of Cherra. Disregarding the myth that the Diengdohs are descended from a mermaid, it may be stated that there seems to be a fairly general belief amongst the Diengdohs that their first ancestress or *kiaw* came from the

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country beyond the Kopili river (some go so far as to say that she came from the Assam Valley), to the Jaintia Hills, where she found a husband. Legend relates that it was one of the peculiarities of this woman that she was able to accommodate herself in an earthen jar or *lalu*, which fact gave rise to the name *Lalu* by which she and her children were called by the Syntengs. The family prospered during the time when a powerful chief of the Malngiang clan held sway in the Jaintia Hills. On the death of this king a civil war arose, and the *Lalu* family, together with many others, beat a retreat across the river Kopili. Here they lived in prosperity for some generations until a plague arose and carried off the whole family except one female, called *Ka Iaw-Iaw*, who became the sole owner of the family wealth. Many desired to marry her for her possessions, and it was owing to their importunities that she fled to Jowai to the house of a *lyngdoh* or priest. The *lyngdoh*, under pressure from his wife, tried to sell Ka Iaw-Iaw as a slave, but no one would offer more than 20 *couries* for her (*shi-bli*); this decided the *lyngdoh* to keep her. Out of gratitude for this kindness, Ka Iaw-Iaw brought her wealth from beyond the Kopili to the *lyngdoh's* house, when the son of the lyngdoh was given her in marriage. They lived happily for some time, when some adventurers from beyond the Kopili came to Jowai with the intention of carrying off this rich bride. The lyngdoh, however, having received warning of their intent, arranged for the escape of Ka Iaw-Iaw, and they fled to Sohphohkynurum, a place near Nongkrem in the Khasi Hills, where she established a village. Here Ka Iaw-Iaw was called *Ka Iaw-shibdi*, because she paid every man who was engaged by her in founding a market there 20 cowries (*shi-bdi*) per day for their labours. Here also she is credited with having first introduced the art of smelting iron, and she is said to have made various iron implements which she exported to the plains. She is also said to have kept a huge herd of pigs which she fed in a large trough hollowed out of a *diengdoh* tree; it is to this fact that the Diengdoh clan owes its name. After *Ka Iaw-shibdi* and her children had lived for some years in prosperity at Sohphohkynurum, they were attacked by the Swarga Raja (the Ahom King), U Iong

Raja (probably the Raja of Jaintia), and the Assamese Barphukan. They fled to a place called Lyndiangumthli, near Lyngkyrdem. Finding this place unsuitable as a home, the family split up into four divisions. One division returned to Jowai, where it increased and multiplied and afterwards grew into the Lalu clan, another went to Nongkhlaw and became the Diengdoh Kylla clan; another went to Mawiong and formed what is now known as the Pariong clan; the fourth, after some vicissitudes of fortune, went to Rangjyrteh and Cherra, at which place it established the powerful Diengdohbah clan, and became afterwards one of the chief *mantri* or minister clans of this state. I have quoted the history of the origin of the Diengdoh clan at some length, to show what I consider to be an example of the Khasi conceptions of how the clan was formed, i.e. from a common ancestress, all of the clans having traditions more or less of descent from some particular *Kiaw* or ancestress. This story moreover is remarkable as pointing to a Khasi migration from beyond the Kopili river to their present abode. The clans of the present day are nothing more or less than overgrown families, they are bound together by the religious tie of ancestor-worship in common, and of a common tribal sepulchre, except in cases of clans which have, owing to their size, split up into several sub-divisions, like the Diengdoh clan; such sub-divisions possessing their own cromlechs. Ancestor-worship in common and tribal sepulchres in common seem to indicate that the original unit was the family and not the tribe, for there would be no reason for the members of a clan to worship the same household gods and to deposit the remains of the clan members in the same tomb unless there was some strong tie, such as that of consanguinity, binding them together. It has been already mentioned that each of these clans is strictly exogamous; this again supports the family origin theory. A Khasi can commit no greater sin than to marry within the tribe. Some of the clans are prohibited moreover from intermarriage with other clans, because of such clans being of common descent. If the titles (see Appendix) are carefully examined, it will be seen that some of them bear the names of animals, such as the *Shnich* or monkey clan, the *Thaw* or crab clan, or of trees, such as the Diengdoh clan (already referred to). The

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recent years there have been instances of Siems having been summoned, like the Roman Cincinnatus, from quite humble positions, to undertake the duties of chief. We will now turn to an examination of the systems in the different Siemships. In the Kyrim or Nongkrem State there is a spiritual head, i.e. a High Priestess, *Ka Siem Sad*, who is responsible for the due performance of the State religious ceremonies, although, as already stated, the Siem also performs some of these duties. The temporal power here is delegated by the High Priestess to a Siem, who is her son or her nephew, or occasionally some more distant male descendant. It is the duty of an official called a *lyngkor*, who is the official spokesman of the Siem's *durbar*, to propose a new Siem to the six *lyngdohs*, or priests, and to the heads of the twenty-four *mantri* clans. The latter then decide in *durbar* whether the proposed Siem should be appointed. In the event of their disapproving of the *lyngkor's* nominations they proceed to elect another Siem. The High Priestess is appointed by the above electors, the order of succession to the post being as follows:—She is succeeded by her eldest surviving daughter; failing daughters, by the eldest daughter of her eldest daughter; failing daughters of her eldest daughter, by the eldest daughter of her second daughter, and so on. If there are no daughters or grand-daughters, as above, she is succeeded by her eldest sister. In the absence of sisters, she is succeeded by the eldest daughter of her mother's eldest sister, and so on. In this State the tradition runs that the first High Priestess was Ka Pah Syntiew, i.e. the flower-lured one. Ka Pah Syntiew was a beautiful maiden who had as her abode a cave at Marai, near Nongkrem, whence she was enticed by a man of the Mylliem-ngap clan by means of a flower. She was taken by him to be his bride, and she became not only the first High Priestess, but also the mother of the Siems of Nongkrem.* In Nongkrem the electors may disqualify the first, or any, heir to the Siemship for sufficient reason according to the Khasi religion and custom, such as bad character, physical disability, change of religion, &c. If the first heir be disqualified, the next in order must be appointed Siem, unless he be disqualified, and so on. In this State there

* For the story in detail see the Folk-lore section of the monograph.

are six divisions, each of which is known as a *raj*. In each *raj* there is a *durbar*, to which are submitted for approval the elections of the heads of the *mantri* clans. These elections are subject to the approval of the Siem. The Siem, sitting with the *durbar* of the *raj* concerned, may dismiss a *lyngdoh*, *lyngskor*, or *mantri*, for bad conduct, or on account of physical disability, in which case another *lyngdoh*, *lyngskor*, or *mantri* would be appointed, as stated above. The Mylliem State originally formed a portion of the Nongkrem State, but owing to a quarrel between one of the Siems and his nephew there was a partition. In this State the electors are the heads of five *mantri* clans, eleven *matabors*, or heads of clans, and certain *lasans*, and other heads of clans. A majority of the electors is sufficient for the election of a Siem. A Siem is succeeded by the eldest of his uterine brothers; failing such brothers, by the eldest of his sisters' sons; failing such nephews, by the eldest of the sons of his sisters' daughters; failing such grand-nephews, by the eldest of the sons of his mother's sisters; and, failing such first cousins, by the eldest of his male cousins on the female side, other than first cousins, those nearest in degree of relationship having prior claim. If there were no heirs male, as above, he would be succeeded by the eldest of his uterine sisters; in the absence of such sisters, by the eldest of his sister's daughters; failing such nieces, by the eldest of the daughters of his sisters' daughters; failing such grand-nieces, by the eldest of the daughters of his mother's sisters; and failing such first cousins, by the eldest of his female cousins on the female side, other than first cousins, those nearest in degree of relationship having prior claim. A female Siem would be succeeded by her eldest son, and so on. As in the Khyrim State, the first, or any other subsequent heir, may be disqualified by the electors for sufficient reason. An elector is succeeded by the eldest of his brothers; failing brothers, by the eldest of the sons of his sisters, and so on. An elector can be dismissed by the Siem, but only for good cause and with the consent of his *durbar*.

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In the Nongstoin State there is a tradition that the first Siem originally came from Simsong* Durgapur. The name,

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* Simsong is the Garo name for the river Someshwari.

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643 Sushong Durgapur, of the place at the foot of the Garo Hills in
773 the Mymensing district, may be a corruption of the formen
The Siems are supposed to be descended from a stag, possibly a
relic of totemism in this family. In this State[1] there is a large
631 electoral durbar consisting of 2 *mantris*, 31 *lyndohs*, 25
622 *sirdars*, 1 *lyngskor*, and 1 *basan*. The *lyndohs* are the
heads of the priestly clans, by whom they are chosen. The
sirdars of villages are appointed by the Siem in conjunction
with the adult males of the different villages. There are two
lyngskors and two *basans* in the State, but one *lyngskor* and one
basan only at present are members of the *durbar* which
[634] nominates the Siem. A *lyngskor* is the Siem's agent for the
purpose of governing a collection of villages. He is appointed
by the Siem with the consent of the adult males of the villages
643 which he is to supervise. The Siem family of Nongkhlaw, or
Khadsawphra, is believed to have been founded by a Synteng
of the name of U Shajer, who left the Jowai hills with his
sister, Ka Shaphlong, because she had failed to obtain her share
of the family property in Jaintia. This man is said to have
purchased certain lands in Bardwar in Kamrup. Apparently
he did not obtain possession of this estate, for he came up into
the Khasi Hills, and finding there certain villages without a
ruler, he, at the wish of the *lyngdohs* of these villages, con-
solidated them into a state over which he ruled as a Siem. He
was succeeded by his sister's son, U Syntiew, who further
extended his territories until he obtained possession of other
villages. U Syntiew is said to have delegated a portion of his
powers to his two sisters, Ka Jem and Ka Sanglar, who ruled
at Sohiong and Nongkhlaw respectively. Succeeding rulers
[726] further extended the Nongkhlaw territory. In 1829, U Tirut
Singh rebelled against the East India Company and carried on
for four years a successful guerilla warfare. He was finally
captured, and was imprisoned for life by the British Govern-
643 ment. According to the statement of Raja Kine Singh, it would
631 seem that formerly the heads of five clans had the right to appoint
[614] the Siem, i.e. the heads of 3 *lyngdoh* clans and of the Jaid
Dykhar, and Diengdoh clans. In the Cherra State the electors
are the male adults of the State, who are represented on the
State durbar by the *mantris* of the 12 aristocratic clans, known
as the Khadar kur, and certain representative elders.

[1] [i.e. the Nongstoin State --- Analyst]

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[441] challenge. From the records available of the military operations of the Khasis against the British, the former appear to have relied principally on bows and arrows, ambushes and surprises, when they fought against us at the time of our first occupation of the hills. During the Jaintia rebellion firearms were used, to some extent, by the Syntengs. The military records do not, however, disclose any peculiar battle customs as having been prevalent amongst those hill people then. Both Khasis and Syntengs seem to have fought much in the same manner as other savage hill-men have fought against a foe armed with superior weapons.

HUMAN SACRIFICES.

The Thlen Superstition.

There is a superstition among the Khasis concerning a *thlen*, a gigantic snake which requires to be appeased by the sacrifice of human victims, and for whose sake murders have even in fairly recent times been committed. The following account, the substance of which appeared in the *Assam Gazette*, in August, 1882, but to which considerable additions have been made, will illustrate this interesting superstition:—"The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Cherrapunji,* a gigantic snake, or *thlen*, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a herd of goats, and set himself down by the cave, and offered them one by one to the *thlen*. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of flesh which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man, acting under the advice of a god called *U Suid-noh*,† (who has as his abode a grove near Sohrarim),

* This cave is at Pomdalai, some five miles west of Cherrapunji, close to a great waterfall called *Noh Ka Likai*, i.e. the place where Ka Likai jumped down the precipice (for a full account of this story see Section V. of the monograph), where there is a large block of stone, with some cuts over it, known as *Dain Thlen*, i.e. the snake cutting (place).

† In another account it is said to have been U Suid-noh himself who did this.

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having heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake, at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red-hot lump, and so killed him. He proceeded to cut up the body, and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was obeyed, the country became free of the *thlen*, but one small piece remained which no one would eat, and from this sprang a multitude of *thlens*, which infest the residents of Cherra and its neighbourhood. When a *thlen* takes up its abode in a family there is no means of getting rid of it, though it occasionally leaves of its own accord, and often follows family property that is given away or sold. The *thlen* attaches itself to property, and brings prosperity and wealth to the owners, but on the condition that it is supplied *with blood*. Its craving comes on at uncertain intervals, and manifests itself by sickness, by misadventure, or by increasing poverty befalling the family that owns the property. It can only be appeased by the murder of a human being." The murderer cuts off the tips of the hair of the victim with silver scissors, also the finger nails, and extracts from the nostril a little blood caught in a bamboo tube, and offers these to the *thlen*. The murderer, who is called *u nongshohnoh*, literally, "the beater," before he sets out on his unholy mission, drinks a special kind of liquor called, *ka 'iad tang-shi-snem* (literally, liquor which has been kept for a year). This liquor, it is thought, gives the murderer courage, and the power of selecting suitable victims for the *thlen*. The *nongshohnoh* then sets out armed with a short club, with which to slay the victim, hence his name *nongshohnoh*, i.e. one who beats; for it is forbidden to kill a victim on these occasions with any weapon made of iron, inasmuch as iron was the metal which proved fatal to the *thlen*. He also takes the pair of silver scissors above mentioned, a silver lancet to pierce the inside of the nostrils of the deceased, and a small bamboo or cylinder to receive the blood drawn therefrom. The *nongshohnoh* also provides himself with rice called "*u 'khaw tyndep*," i.e. rice mixed with turmeric after certain incantations have taken place. The murderer throws a little of this rice over his intended victim, the effect of which is to stupefy the

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insects, and to roam on this earth: but this idea of transmigration of souls has been probably borrowed from the Hindus. Bivar writes that although the ideas of a Godhead are not clearly grasped, yet a supreme creator is acknowledged, and that the following is the tradition relating to the creation of man. "God in the beginning having created man, placed him on the earth, but on returning to look at him, found he had been destroyed by the evil spirit. This happened a second time, whereupon the Deity created first a dog, then a man; and the dog, who kept watch, prevented the devil from destroying the man, and the work of the Deity was thus preserved." The Khasis, apparently, do not believe in punishment after death, at least, there is no idea of hell, although the spirits of those who have died under the ban of *sang* remain uneasy, being obliged to wander about the earth in different forms, as noted above. The spirits worshipped by the Khasis are many in number, those of the Syntengs being specially numerous. The particular spirit to be propitiated is ascertained by egg-breaking. The offering acceptable to the spirit is similarly ascertained and is then made. If the particular sacrifice does not produce the result desired, a fowl is sacrificed; the entrails being then examined, an augury is drawn, and the sacrifice begins afresh. As the process of egg-breaking is believed to be peculiar * to the Khasis amongst the Assam hill tribes, a separate description of it is given in the Appendix. It should be remarked that the Khasis never symbolize their gods by means of images, their worship being offered to the spirit only. The following are some of the principal spirits worshipped by the Khasis and Syntengs, omitting the spirits of deceased ancestors such as *Ka Iawbi*, *u Thawlang*, and *u Suidnia*, which will be described under the heading of ancestor-worship.

U'lei umlah—the god of the State, who is propitiated yearly by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.

U'lei umtong—the god of water, used for drinking and cooking purposes. This god is similarly propitiated once a year, so that the water supply may remain pure.

* Sir Charles Lyall has pointed out that the Mikirs possess this custom; it is probably borrowed from the Khasis.

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Mr. Jenkins, in his interesting little work on "Life and
753 Work in Khasia," gives a slightly different account of the
776 superstition, in that he states that it is the sick person who
826 is possessed by *ka Taroh*. The above belief is perhaps a
164 Synteng development of the Khasi *thlen* superstition. In
177 the Jaintia Hills "the small-pox" is believed to be a goddess, and is reverenced accordingly. Syntengs regard it as an honour to have had small-pox, calling the marks left by the disease the "kiss of the goddess"; the more violent the attack and the deeper the marks, the more highly honoured is the person affected. Mr. Jenkins says, "When the goddess has entered a house, and smitten any person or persons with this disease, a trough of clean water is placed outside the door, in order that every one before entering may wash their feet therein, the house being considered sacred." Mr. Rita mentions cases of women washing their hair in water used by a small-pox patient, in order that they may contract the disease, and women have been known actually to bring their little children into the house of a small-pox patient, in order that they may become infected and thus receive the kiss of the goddess. It is possible that the Syntengs, who were for some time under Hindu influences, may in their ignorance have adopted this degraded form of worship of the Hindu goddess, "Sitala Devi," who is adored as a divine mother under different names by Hindus all over India: cf., her name *mari-amman*, or mother of death, in the South of India, and the name Āi, mother, of the Assamese.

In the Khasi Hills the god of small-pox is known under the name of *u Siem ñiang thylliew*. He is not, however, appeased in any way, the people calling on two other spirits, *Thynrei* and *Sapa*, to whom a fowl or a goat is offered.

776 This section cannot be closed without some reference to the
● 773 household gods of the Syntengs. The legend is that in ancient times there came a woman "from the end of heaven to the borders of the country of *u Truh*" (the country of the plains people at a distance from the foot of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills). The name of the woman was Ka Taben, and she was accompanied by her children. She offered herself to *u Dkhar*, the plains man, as a household goddess, but he rejected her. She then went to the Khasis, who were ploughing their fields,

and offered to help them with their cultivation. The Khasis also refused her, saying they were capable of managing their own cultivation, and at the same time told her to go to the country of the Bhois and Syntengs, i.e. the Jaintia Hills. Acting on this advice, she went to the village of Nongphyllud in the Jaintia Hills, where the people again turned a deaf ear to her. She proceeded to Mulagula village in Jaintia, at the foot of the Jaintia Hills, and ascended from thence to Rymbai, where she met a man who conducted her to the house of the Siem, who consented that she and her children should live with him. Ka Taben then apportioned to her children various duties in the house of the Siem as follows:—Ka Rasong was to look after the young unmarried folk, and was to supervise their daily labour and to prosper their trading operations at the markets. Next Ka Rasong was given a place at the foot of the king post, *trai rishot*, and her duty was to befriend young men in battle. Then came *Ka Longkhuinruid*, alias *ka Thab-bulong*, who said, "There are no more rooms in the house for my occupation, so I will go and live in the forest, and him who turns not his coat when I meet him I will make mad." Finally came *U Lamsymphud*, who elected to live with his youngest sister inside the house.

There are special sacrifices offered to these household deities. The leaves of the *sning*, or Khasi oak, are wrapped round the post of the house, and a fowl is sacrificed and other formalities are observed which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The legend of the arrival of Ka Taben with her children in the Synteng country from a distant clime is interesting in that it perhaps indicates the possibility of the migration of these people, i.e. the Syntengs, in ancient times from some distant place to their present abode.

ANCESTOR-WORSHIP.

The Khasis not only revere the memories of deceased ancestors, but they adore them by means of offerings, which are sometimes periodical, and sometimes made when thought neces-

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should be severed with one blow. As soon as the head was cut off there was a rush on the part of the sacrificers to see in which direction the head faced. If the head faced towards the north or west, it was considered an evil omen; if it faced towards the south or east, a good omen. The east is a lucky quarter amongst the Assamese also. The people ended up the proceedings by giving a long-drawn-out, deep-toned chant, or *kynhoi*. Immediately after the ceremony was concluded hundreds of boats shot out from the numerous creeks, where they had been lying, and fished the river all night, the result being an immense haul, to the delight of the Lynngams, who were seen next morning roasting the fish whole on bamboo stakes, after which they consumed them, the entrails being eaten with great gusto. Such is the worship of the goddess of the Punatit.

Similar pujas take place among the people of Wár-ding (the valley of fire) before they fish in the Khai-mara river and elsewhere in the Khasi Hills. In the Jaintia Hills there is the Synteng-worship of the Kopili river, which used to be accompanied by human sacrifices, as has been mentioned above, pp. 102-104. The Myntang river, a tributary of the Kopili, must also be annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat. Numerous hills also are worshipped, or rather the spirits which are said to inhabit them. One of the best known hill godlings is the deity who is thought to inhabit the little wood close to the summit of the Shillong Peak. This deity is said to have been discovered by a man named "U Shillong," who gave his name to the Shillong Peak, and indirectly to our beautiful hill station. The Siems of Mylliem and Nongkrem reverence *U'lei Shillong*, and there are certain clans who perform periodical sacrifices to this god. Probably the origin of the superstitious reverence with which U'lei Shillong is held by the Siems of Nongkrem and Mylliem is that their fabled ancestress "Ka Pah Syntiew," of whom an account will be found in the folk-lore section, took her origin from a rock not far from the Shillong Peak in the Nongkrem direction.

Rableng Hill, which is within full view of the Shillong Peak in an easterly direction, is also said to be the abode of a minor god who is periodically propitiated by the members of the Máwthoh clan of the Khyrim State with a he-goat and a cock.

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Apparently no special puja is performed to U Kyllang (the Kyllang Rock) nowadays.

The picturesque hill of Symper, which rises abruptly from the plain in the Siemship of Maharam, is visible for many miles. It is in shape not unlike the Kyllang. Symper is said to be the abode of a god called "U Symper." There is a folk-tale that Kyllang and Symper fought a great battle, and that the numerous holes in the rocks at the base of the Symper hill are evidences of their strife. At the base of Symper there is a great cave, where many cattle find shelter in rainy weather. The people of Mawsynram propitiate the god of Symper in cases of sickness by sacrificing a he-goat or a bull. Symper, like *U'lei Shillong*, is one of the minor deities of the Khasis.

Close to Shangpung, in the Jaintia Hills, there is a small hill called "*u lúm ŋyddieng blai lyngdoh*," where sacrifices are offered on an altar at seed time and when the corn comes into ear. This altar used to be overshadowed by a large oak tree. The tree is now dead.

The Wars of Nongjri worship "*u'leį lyngdoh*," the tutelary deity of the village, under the spreading roots of a large rubber tree which gives its name to this village Nongjri. This village worship is performed by a village priest (*lyngdoh*) at stated intervals, or whenever it is considered necessary. There are numerous other instances of hills and rivers being regarded as the abode of godlings, but those quoted above are sufficient for purposes of illustration.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND SACRIFICES, DIVINATION.

The Khasis, as has been explained already, worship numerous gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are supposed to exercise good or evil influence over human beings according to whether they are propitiated with sacrifices or not. They are even supposed to possess the power of life and death, over men and women, subject to the control of *u Blei Nongthúr*, God the Creator. Thus illness, for example, is thought to be caused by one or more of the spirits on account of some act or omission, and health can only be

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restored by the due propitiation of the offended spirits. 776
In order to ascertain which is the offended spirit, a system 782
of divination by means of cowries, breaking eggs, or 753
examining the entrails of animals and birds, was instituted. 787
The Khasi method of obtaining auguries by examining the viscera of animals and birds may be compared with that of the Roman *haruspex*. Some description of these modes of divination has been given at the end of this chapter. The 771
Khasi religion has been described by Bivar as "demon worship, 773
or a jumble of enchantments muttered by priests who are 783
sorcerers." But even a religion which is thus unflatteringly 825
described is based on the cardinal doctrines of sin and sacrifice for sin. Tradition amongst the Khasis states that in the beginning (*mynnyngkong ka sngi*) there was no sin, heaven and earth were near each other, and man had direct intercourse with God. How man fell into sin is not stated, but it is certain that he did fall. Experts at "egg healing" never forget to repeat the formula "*nga briéw nga la pop*" (I man have sinned). The cock then appears as a mediator between God and man. The cock is styled "*u khún ka blei uba kit ryndang ba shah ryndang na ka bynta jong nga u briéw*," i.e. the son of god who lays down his neck (life) for me man. The use of the feminine *ka blei* is no doubt due to matriarchal influences. There is another prayer in which the Khasis say, "*ap jutang me u blei ieng rangbah me u briéw*" (oh god do not forget the covenant, arise oh man). The idea is that man has fallen into sins of omission and commission (*ka pop, ka lait ka let*) but that God is nevertheless expected to spare him, and to accept a substitute for him according to the covenant (*jutang*). By this covenant God is supposed to have accepted in exchange the cock as a substitute for man. How the cock came to occupy such an 771
important position, tradition is vague and self-conflicting. The 825
fact remains that the covenant of the cock is the foundation 171
of the Khasi religion. It is of interest to mention that amongst the Ahoms the tradition is that Khunlung and Khunlái brought down from heaven the *kái-chán-mung*,* or pair of heavenly fowls, and that to this day the sacrifice of the

* In Ahom *kái* = fowl, *chán* = beautiful, *mung* = country. Therefore *Kái-chán-mung* = fowl of a beautiful country (heaven).

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child are prohibited by custom from crossing a stream or washing their clothes until the navel-string falls off, for fear that the child should be attacked by the demons of the hills and the vales.

The Wár birth customs are substantially the same as those of the Khasis, but there is the difference that a Wár family after a birth is *sang*, or taboo, for seven days, whereas amongst the Khasis the only prohibition is that the parents must not cross a stream or wash their clothes until they have propitiated the spirits. A twin birth is *sang*, or taboo. The Khasis argue that as there is but one *Ka Iawbei* (first ancestress), and one *U Thawlang* (first ancestor), so one child, either male or female, should be born at a time. A twin birth is accordingly regarded as a visitation from God for some *sang*, or transgression, committed by some member of the clan. When the twins are of opposite sexes the *sang* is considered to be extremely serious, the Khasi idea being that defilement has taken place within the womb. The case is treated as one of *shong kur*, or marriage within the clan, and the bones of the twins cannot be placed in the sepulchre of the clan.

There are no special birth customs amongst the Lyngams.

There is no trace of the *couvade* amongst the Khasis.

MARRIAGE.

We now come to consider marriage amongst the Khasis from a religious point of view. Shadwell has said that marriage amongst the Khasis "is purely a civil contract." This statement is not correct, for there is an elaborate religious ceremony at which God the creator, *U'lei thaw briew man briew*, the god or goddess of the State, U or *ka'lei Synshar*, and, what is probably more important, the ancestress and ancestor of the clan, *Ka Iawbei-tymmen* and *U Thawlang*, are invoked. There are three marriage ceremonies prevalent amongst the Khasis, which are (*a*) *Pynhiarsynjat*, (*b*) *Lamdoh*, and (*c*) *Iadih-kiad*, respectively. The first and second forms above mentioned are considered the more respectable; the last-named is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two ceremonies.

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769 211 *Iawbei khynraw*, or *ka Iawbei kpoh* (the grandmother of the family, or branch of the family). It frequently happens that there are two flat table-stones in front of the upright stones, the one on the left being *ka Iawbei tynrai*, or the first ancestress, and the one on the right *ka Iawbei longkpoh*, the grandmother of the branch of the clan to which the memorialists belong, or *ka Iawbei khynraw*, the young grandmother, i.e. the grandmother of the actual family to which the memorialists belong. In olden days it used to be the custom for the clans-
[772] people to place offerings of food on the flat table-stones for the shades of the departed ancestors, and this is sometimes the case still; but now it is more frequently the custom to make these offerings in the *iing-seng*, or clan puja-house. The flat table-stones are some 2 to 2½ ft. from the ground, and it is difficult to resist the impression that they were originally sacrificial stones, i.e. that animals or even human beings were actually
773 sacrificed upon them. In connection with this theory I would
782 refer to the interesting folk-tale about the Kopili river. It is here related that in olden days human victims were sacrificed
211 to the Kopili goddess on the flat table-stone (*maw-kynthei*) at a place called *Iew Ksih*, close to the Kopili river. A careful search has been made for this stone, with the result that a flat table-stone has been found near the above village, where goats are still annually sacrificed to the Kopili. The *doloi* reports that this is an ancient custom. None can remember, however, having heard that human victims were ever sacrificed there. Yet I do not think it at all unlikely that this is the stone, locally called *Mynlep*, which is referred to in the folk-tale. At Jaintiapur and Nartiang, both of which places were the headquarters of the kings of Jaintia, there are very large table-stones. We know for a fact that human sacrifices used to take place at Jaintiapur. Is it possible that human beings were immolated on these table-stones? It would be unsafe to base any conclusion on the solitary folk-tale about the *Iew Ksih* table-stone; but the tale certainly furnishes food for reflection. The Khasis borrowed their
[777] religious customs largely from the Synteng inhabitants of
782 Jaintia, and it is possible that they may have obtained the
211 custom of erecting the table-stones from the Syntengs also,
769 and that the latter were originally used [illegible] both of them for sacrificing human victims.

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SECTION V.

FOLK-TALES, TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

FOLK-TALES.

773 128 THE Khasis possess a considerable amount of folk-lore. The tales which will be found reproduced in the original Khasi have been obtained from a collection which was in the possession of the Rev. Dr. Roberts, of Cherrapunji, who very kindly placed it at my disposal. The translations are by U Nissor Singh, Sub-Inspector of Schools, and the author of a Khasi English Dictionary as well as certain other educational works in that language. Dr. Roberts's collections would fill a book; so I have selected only a few of what I consider typical tales. At the instance of Sir Charles Lyall, I have given the Khasi and English side by side. The stories will speak for themselves, 133 but I add a few explanatory notes. The water-fall of Ka Likai 773 is a magnificent cascade in the rainy season; it can best be viewed from the heights of Laitkynsew. The water-fall is situated close to the village of Nongriat, which is approached by a succession of stone steps from the village of Tyrna, just below the Cherrapunji Laitkynsew bridle-path. "Dingiei," which is mentioned in the second tale, is the high hill to be seen on the right-hand side of the Shillong-Cherrapunji road soon after leaving Shillong. The highest point of the range is over 6,000 ft. The third tale contains the well-known story of Ka Pah Syntiew, the fabled ancestress of the Khyrim and Mylliem Siem families. The cave where Ka Pah Syntiew is said to have made her abode is still to be seen in the neighbourhood of Nongkrem. The story of the origin of the Siems of Suhtnga, who afterwards became the Rajas of Jaintiapur, is a well-known tale in the Jaintia Hills. A description of the

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wonderful mass of granite known by the name of the Kyllang Rock will be found in the section of the monograph which deals with geographical distribution. I have also added a photograph of the rock. The Syntengs have a story that when the strong west wind blows in the spring this is due to the advent of *U Kyllang*, who comes to visit his wife, the river *Umngot*, at that season: amongst the Khasis hills are all of them masculine, but to rivers is usually attributed the feminine gender. U Symper is another isolated rocky eminence rising from the Maharam plain close to the village of K'mawan. The best view of the hill is obtainable from Laitmawsiang on the path to Mawsynram. The village of Mawsmai every traveller from Therria to Cherrapunji knows. It is chiefly remarkable for a fairly large limestone cave, and its fine memorial stones. The Khasi theory to explain how the moon got its spots is, I believe, original, but is no more extraordinary than our own nursery tale about the "man in the moon." The *Sohpet Byneng* hill is the first hill of any size that the traveller sees on the Gauhati road when journeying to Shillong. It is close to Umsning Dak Bungalow. There are caves in the hill which are tenanted by bears. Strange to say, according to Khasi ideas, this is one of the highest points in the hills; in reality *Sophet Byneng* is some 2,000 ft. lower than the Shillong Peak. As mentioned elsewhere, the Khasis are very fond of dogs; so I have given their version of how the dog came to live with man. The well-known *thlen* superstition will be found fully described under the heading of "Human sacrifices." I have, however, thought the tale of sufficient interest to reproduce at length here. The story of the river Rupatylli is a pretty tale, and is just such a one as would appeal to the imagination of mountaineers like the Khasis. The Kopili story is important, in that it indicates the origin of human sacrifices in the Jaintia Hills; it also throws, perhaps, some light on the question of the use to which the flat table memorial stones were put in years gone by. The superstition about the crossing of the Kopili can be vouched for by many who have taken the journey from the Jaintia Hills to North Cachar by the Kopili route. Mawpunkyrtiang is a small village close to Cherrapunji. The weird tale about the Siem of Malyniang is the pride of the Maskut people, for in olden days their King,

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i.e. the Siem of Malyniang, is supposed to have been a very powerful monarch amongst the Khasis. The story of Manick Raitong is interesting, in that it explains the origin of the use of the *sharati*, a bamboo flute of special make which is played only at funerals. The pool of water, which was formed after U Manick and the erring queen were burnt, may be connected with the *Umkoi*, or tank, which is dug to cleanse the souls of those who have died violent deaths. The idea of the bamboo, which bore leaves that grew upside-down, springing up from the buried flute, is also to be found in the Synteng tale regarding U Loh Ryndi's fishing-rod. Owing to considerations of space, I have had to curtail largely the folk-lore section. I have, however, kept the materials by me, and if at any future time there is reason to believe that the reproduction of more Khasi folk-lore is called for, I shall be glad to try to arrange that some of the other folk-tales be printed.

THE WATER-FALL OF KA LIKAI.

The water-fall of Ka Likai is one of the most beautiful water-falls in the Khasi Hills. Its stream flows from a certain river from the village of Rangjirteh and passes by the village of Nongriat. The fall can be seen distinctly from the village of Laitkynsew. What a beautiful fall it is when viewed in the autumn. It is also a very high fall. There was in olden days in the village of Rangjirteh a woman called Ka Likai. She was a poor woman who had a husband. When she had given birth to a child, the husband died. Whilst the child was yet a baby, she experienced much trouble in taking care of it on account of her poverty. After the child was able to walk, what a pleasure it was to her to see it growing, and able to play with other children. Then that woman married

KA KSHAID KA LIKAI.

Ka ksháid-ka-Likai ka long kawei ka ksháid ha ri Khasi kaba itynnad shibún eh. Ka wan tuid na kawei ka wah ha ka shnong Rangjirteh kaba wan hap ha ka shnong Nongriat. Ia kane ka ksháid lah ban ioh-i bha na ka shnong Laitkynsew. Katno ka long kaba i-tynnad lada khmih ia ka ha ka por synrái. Ka long ruh kaba jrong shibun eh. La don kawei ka briew ha ka shnong Rangjirteh hyndái kaba kyrteng ka Likai. Kane ka briew ka long kaba duk bad ka la don u tnga, te ynda la kha iwei i khun kynthei uta u tnga u la iap noh. Hamar ka por ba dang lung ita i khun ka la shitom shibún ban sumar ha ka jinglong duk jong ka. Te ynda i la nangiáid katno, ka la sngewbhá ban ioh-i ia la i khun ba i la sháit, bad ba i la nang ba'n leh kái bad ki para khynnah. Te kane ka

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quilt, made out of the bark of a tree, which is beaten out and then carefully woven, several layers of flattened bark being used before the right thickness is attained. This quilt is called by the Lyngams "*Ka syllar*" (Garo *simpak*). Food is cooked in earthen pots, but no plates are used, the broad leaves of the *mariang* tree taking their place. The leaves are thrown away after use, a fresh supply being required for each meal.

The Lyngams brew rice beer, they do not distil spirit; the beer is brewed according to the Khasi method. Games they have none, and there are no jovial archery meetings like those of the Khasis. The Lyngam methods of hunting are setting spring guns and digging pitfalls for game. The people say that now the Government and the Siem of Nongstoin have prohibited both of these methods of destroying game, they no longer employ them. But I came across a pitfall for deer not long ago in the neighbourhood of a village in the Lyngam country. The people declared it to be a very old one; but this I very much doubt, and I fear that these objectionable methods of hunting are still used. The Lyngams fish to a small extent with nets, but their idea of fishing, *par excellence*, is poisoning the streams, an account of which has already been given in this monograph. The Lyngams are omnivorous feeders, they may be said to eat everything except dogs, snakes, the *hulak* monkey, and lizards. They like rice, when they can get it; for sometimes the out-turn of their fields does not last them more than a few months. They then have to fall back on Job's tears and millet. They eat arums largely, and for vegetables they cook wild plantains and the young shoots of bamboos and cane plants. The Lyngams are divided up into exogamous clans in the same manner as the Khasis. The clans are overgrown families. The Lyngams have some stories regarding the founders of these clans, of which the following is a specimen:—"A woman was asleep under a *sohbar* tree in the jungle, a flower from which fell on her, and she conceived and bore a female child who was the ancestress of the Nongsohbar clan." Some of the stories of the origins of other clans do not bear repeating. There do not appear to be any hypergamous groups. As with the Khasis, it is a deadly sin to

• 773 782 Several Khasis claim that the devil prescribed to their ancestors the method of sacrificing. On the other hand others maintain that in times past a man of rare size and strength came to their country. This man accomplished wonderful things, and commanded their ancestors to sacrifice and at the same time prescribed for them the method of sacrificing. Today the place [103] of his former dwelling on a mountain near Shillong is still pointed out. Since something divine was suspected in that man, he was called u 'lei shillong (the god Shillong).

776 The Khasi believe in a highest being, whom they call u blei nongthaw (1) (the creator god).

[194] 1. Pronounciation of Khasi (method of writing): ei is pronounced as two syllables, e - i, w is pronounced like u, aw is therefore like a - u, sh is pronounced like sch = phonetic š.

Just as the ideas about this person are very hazy, so are the concepts of eternity and the soul.

775 The Khasi are not in agreement among themselves about the conception of what happens to the soul after death. Several say that after death the soul goes up in the air and becomes air and therefore exists no longer. But most of them believe that the soul exists after death and can be happy or unhappy. But this does not depend on personal guilt or sin but only on the conscientious completion of the burial ceremonies.

[631] 776 The country in which the Khasi live is divided into several districts, which were formerly ruled by several kings before the English came. [408] According to the Khasi each district

776 has its own tutelary god on whom they confer the name of the district.

Villages have their own tutelary gods, families have their tutelary gods, even individual people ha.. their guardian gods, to whom they occasionally bring a sacrifice.

The Khasi and Synteng also honor gods who are not thought of as tutelary gods but as dispensers of purely material favors, as, for example, u 'lei longspah (god of wealth) and u'lei umtong (the god of water which is used for cooking and drinking). (2)

2. Cf. (below, p. 410) the summarized table of some of the good and evil gods who are honored by the Khasi and the Synteng.

But in general the Khasi believe that the gods or spirits are evil spirits, whom they then designate with the name ksuid (devil).

782 They believe that their country is full of such ksuid. The chief task of the Khasi is to pacify them. They try by all means to put them in a good mood, and to appease them by sacrifice. It is fear which incites them to their religious activities, not respect or actual reverence. For the Khasi are convinced that it was formerly better. They relate that in the beginning [773] heaven and earth were near together, that people could consort directly with u blei nongthaw the creator god, and that there was still no sin at that time. Now, however, man is sinful and no one offering a sacrifice forgets to pronounce the formula: nga briu nga la pop (I, man, have sinned). Thus the concept sin is one of the bases of the Khasi religion. The other basis is sacrifice. There is no doubt that sin and sacrifice make up the basic thoughts of the religious views

782

sacrifice — that is the murder itself.

3. to describe the offering of the sacrifice.

Following from this, several questions arise of their own accord, namely:

1. How do the people accept these facts?
   a) the fear among the people,
   b) the liberation from thlen,
   c) story of former thlen possessors.

2. The position of the English-Indian government to these human sacrifices?

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1. The Thlen Legend

About five miles west of Cherrapungi, (15)

15. The following accounts are taken from the article "Menschenopfer unter den Khasi" /Human Sacrifice Among the Khasi/ by Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S., Salvatorianische Mitteilungen /Salvatorian Communications/ 1909, No. 5, pp. 75 ff.

near the great waterfall Noh ka Likai, there is the cave Pomialai, about which an old Khasi legend is concerned. The dwelling place of an enormous snake —called u thlen — which caused great destruction among men and animals was once here. People had to pass here to go to market; half of them were regularly swallowed by the thlen, the others could continue their way peacefully. It was a rule for the thlen, only to consume half the number of people or animals that came by. After many people had lost their lives in this fashion, the Khasi one day held a large meeting, a darbar, with the inhabitants of the valleys, to consider how they could

773 776 782 remedy this great misfortune. A brave man named Suidnoh volunteered to cause a change. He began to drive goats, pigs, and cattle to the thlen to give them to the snake to eat. After he had done this for quite some time, the thlen became quite tame and trusting. One day Suidnoh brought along a piece of glowing hot iron which he held with a tongs. He ordered the snake to open its mouth so that he could give it a piece of meat. The snake believed him, opened its mouth and Suidnoh quickly thrust the glowing hot iron in its throat so that the snake burst with horrible writhings. In another gathering it was decided to cut the snake into two pieces: the inhabitants of the valley were supposed to eat one half, the Khasi the other half. Since the former are very numerous, it was easy for them to manage their portion; but the Khasi could not quite master their share and left some of it. Others say that in the village Mawphu, west of Cherrapuonji, an old woman forgot to eat up her share. In short the Khasi did not quite get rid of their share and so it came about that the snake could grow again and he still lives among them up to the present day.

[725] 2. The Preparations for the Sacrifice

However the thlen is no longer the public waylayer of previous times. He has withdrawn into the interior of the houses; also he no longer is in just one place, but may be found in several. There are certain families that are considered possessors of such a devil snake and are known as such among the people. They are simply called the Nongri thlen, owners of a thlen. The thlen is cared for and secretly kept by the owner very carefully in a safe place. It is only supposed to be seen by members of the household

776 of the thlen owner. It is also said of the snake
773 that it can reduce itself to the size of a thin
782 thread and therefore can easily find a place in a basket or earthern jar. Others even say that it has the power to change itself into a cat or a rooster or a stone and to stay with the owner in this form.

776 The possession of the thlen[1] is a valuable
782 thing for the owner; for where the thlen makes
682 his home, it brings good fortune and wealth to the family. However, the snake only does this on the condition that it is provided with human blood. If it does not receive this, it announces itself from time to time in the family concerned during the night in a dream. If its desires are still not fulfilled, it then comes bringing sickness, misfortune, impoverishment, and the like. There is nothing that the owner can do other than satisfy or propitiate the thlen by human murder. In the night he waits for his victim alone or with another whom he has hired for this purpose. Often the thlen worshippers have a so-called nongbylla, i.e., a wage earner who shares the wealth of his master for his efforts without having to bother with other work. He goes out in ambush with his master and watches hidden from the heights of a mountain, or along the road, or at the edge of the forest to see whether anyone is coming along the way. By signs or shouts he warns his master who is waiting some distance away, and then they commit the murder together. Both are usually disguised and armed with a wooden club for killing their victim. The ordinary people call these murderers in the service of the thlen as well as the thlen worshippers in general only nongshoh noh, literally, killers. They may not use iron weapons for committing their dark deeds, as iron proved to be fatal for the thlen tribal father, as was told

[1 La demi snake, see category 116, pp. 29-31--Analyst]

782 One month before the celebration rice liquor is poured into a hollowed-
796 out gourd bottle in the house of the S'iem sad and offered before the rishot Blei as a 'suit' (sacrifice of drink). This is done in order to in-
[769] form the u Suidnia long S'iem (the spirit of the first great-uncle on
[774] the maternal side who was the first king), the ka Blei long S'iem (the divinity who makes kings kings) and the u Blei Shillong (the god Shillong), that preparations are now being made for the Puja and that they might help with them.

776 The u Blei Shillong plays the chief part in the whole ceremony. He enjoys great reverence among the Khasi, especially in the kingdom Nongkrem and Nylliem. Not far from Nongkrem a mountain
[133] peak rises 6,450 feet above the sea. It is the highest peak in the Khasi Mountains; its name is "Shillong Peak." Here is the seat of
[773] the god Shillong. The story goes that a man appeared here once, who said he /894/ had not been born but came of himself (shu long). He also told the people that they would receive the kings, S'iem. So the god who lives here was called u Shu long (he who is out of him-
[103] self), from which the Europeans gradually made the word Shillong and also gave this name to the splendid mountain station in the heart of the Khasi Mountains.

796 After the S'iem sad has determined exactly the day of the cere-
782 monies, the news of this is sent out two weeks prior to the ceremony to the village elders (Rangbah shnong). This is done on the day of the large market (jeu duh), which takes place every eighth day. Two weeks after is the pom blang, also on the day of the large market, which is discussed below.

The way in which the invitation is issued is interesting. A num-
[211] ber of chains about an ell long are made of bamboo rings. These are called kyrwoh. One of these is sent to the oldest man of each village. Since the Khasi formerly had no script, this bamboo chain always served as a sign of invitation or summons to the S'iem for ceremonies, or of danger of war, or of court matters and such. The degree of urgency was shown by the form of the links; in the case of great haste the form was longish and flat, otherwise correspondingly rounder. The sending of the kyrwoh to the village elders serves now as a sign of invitation for the whole village to appear at the ceremonies and at the same time as a demand to gather together the prescribed sacri-
[651] ficial gifts. Each of the six districts, into which the kingdom Nongkrem is divided, must furnish a goat; each individual hut must pay a tax (called pynshok) of one rupee and four annas in addition. Very poor people only have to pay one anna or even only a half. The sacrificial gifts, such as rice, various sacrificial animals, fish, brandy

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(ii) It is *sang* to use nails in fixing the timber of a house. 784

(iii) The *dypei*, or hearth, should be made of one kind of timber only.

(iv) To build a house with resinous timber (*'seh khlein*). Only the Siem's family can use such timber.

(v) To cut trees from the sacred forest.

(vi) To take or give anything with the left hand.

(vii) To step over the body of any person.

(viii) To kill a fowl or a goat without throwing first rice over the body of the victim.

(ix) To drink the milk of a cow or goat.

(x) To talk with any one, except with those who are working together, when the thrashing of paddy is going on.

(xi) Not to give fire or water when anyone demands the same.

(xii) A twin birth is *sang*. It is a more serious matter even than *sang* if the twins are of opposite sexes.

There are rules of *sang* regarding marriages within prohibited degrees of relationship, and there is a very stringent rule of *sang* against marrying within the *kur*, or clan. Those who do this are excommunicated and their bones or ashes are not allowed to be placed in the family mausoleum. To marry within the same *kur*, or clan, is the greatest crime a Khasi can commit. 784 582

There are special rules of *sang* affecting certain families, *e.g.*, for the clan *Nongtathiang* to eat a certain kind of lemon, for the clan *Kharumnuid* to eat pork, for the Cherra Siem's family to eat dry fish, for the family of the Siem of Mylliem to eat the pumpkin. Possibly, these taboos may be relics of totemism in these families. 784 614

14. *The Thlen superstition.*—The following succinct account of this interesting superstition appeared on page 254, paragraph 20, of the *Assam Gazette* of the 5th August 1882. I do not think I can do better than repeat it here: "The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Cherrapunji a gigantic snake, or *Thlen*, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a herd of goats and set himself down by the cave and offered them one by one to the *Thlen*. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of flesh which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red hot lump, and so killed him. He then cut up the body and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was 773

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

773 obeyed, the country became free of the *Thlen*: but one small piece remained which no one would eat, and from this sprang a multitude of *Thlens*, which infest the residents of Cherra and its neighbourhood. When a *Thlen* takes up its abode in a family there is no means of getting rid of it, though it occasionally leaves of its own accord, and often follows property of the family when given away or sold. The *Thlen* attaches itself to wealth, and brings prosperity and wealth to the family, but on the condition that it is supplied *with blood*. Its craving comes on at uncertain intervals: and manifests itself by sickness among the family, by misadventure, or increasing poverty. It can only be appeased by the murder of a human being. The murderer takes the hair, the tips of the fingers, and a little blood from the nostril, caught in a bamboo tube, and offers these to the *Thlen*. The belief is that the demon then appears in the form of a snake and devours the body of the murdered person, which is materialised from the portions thus offered. After this, its craving is satisfied for a time, and the affairs of that house prosper. Many families in these hills are known or suspected to be *Ri-thlen*, or keepers of a *Thlen*, and are dreaded and avoided in consequence. Whenever a dead body is found with the marks above described on it (and particularly if it is with no wound, and death has been caused by twisting the neck), it may be presumed with almost absolute certainty that the object of the murder was to appease a *Thlen*."

[171] It may be stated that, as far as I am aware in Assam, this superstition is peculiar to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and it is not to be met with amongst any of the other hill-tribes of the province. It would be specially interesting to learn whether there are any traces of a similar superstition amongst any of the tribes of Burma and Further India. The *Thlen* superstition is probably of a very ancient origin. It may be said to take the place amongst the Khasis of the head-hunting custom amongst the Nagas. The *Thlen* superstition is still deeprooted-amongst the people here, in many portions of the country the Khasis being afraid to walk out after dark for fear of being attacked by *nongshohnohs*, or persons who are searching for victims to sacrifice to the *Thlen*.

805 15. *Calculation of time.*—The Khasis adopt the lunar month. The names of the lunar months have been extracted from Colonel Bivar's report below. I am not certain whether all Colonel Bivar's explanations of meanings of the names of the months are correct:

U Kylla-lyn-kot,—the wood-burning moon, corresponding with January.

U Rympang,—the windy moon, corresponding with February.

U Lyber,—the seed-sowing moon, corresponding with March.

13: Mukherjee E-5 (1954)1958 AR7 Khasi AR7

The primal father and the mother of the members of every clan are respectively known as *U-Parad* (*U-Thawlang*) and *Ka-Meyrad* (*Ka-Iawbei*).

There is a large number of clans among the Khasis and some of the clan names are those of animals and trees. *Shrieh* is monkey, *tham*, a crab, and *dingdoh*, a tree ; yet they do not constitute totemic clan organization. The clan names are not even the names of the ancestress. The clans are not ancestral but rather were territorial in nature when the clansmen (*shi-Kur*) used to live in a place having a common land (*ri-kur*) and a clan ossuary (*mawbah*) where the bones of the dead clansmen were deposited.

Unlike the clans, the sub-clans (*ka-k'poh*) are ancestral. As for example, in case of the *Siem* clan of the Chera state, it is found that Ka-Khiem was the primal ancestress. Her daughter Ka-Pet had three daughters, namely, Ka-Sngi, Ka-Lngen, and Ka-Kreh each of whom is regarded as the *Ka-K' poh* (*meaning* womb) of their respective descendants who are *shi-K'poh* (the members of the same womb). And their names are the names of the three sub-clans of the *siem* clan.

The names of the sub-clans of some of the clans as collected from the elderly Khasi women are given below.

CLAN	SUB-CLAN
1. Siem	— sngi ; lngen , kreh
2. Khongsit	— yin , phai ; kar ; jiram
3. Kharshiing	— iew ; mah ; saynglar , lyngan
4. Lyngdoh	— kaban ; sumbhir ; kamai
5. Nongrum	— tungan ; tungwi ; syngna , buhai
6. Khongrymai	— thania ; thani , barhai , lisi
7. Jaidkhar	— kasi ; haza , tuli ; tula
8. Simpliliar	— eli ; mayar ; josi , emi

Family (*ka-iing*) among the Khasis is the socio-economic and religious unit. Due to matrilocal residence, the structure of the Khasi families assumes a different form. The constituent members are the grandmother, her daughters and their children. But the parmanent residents are the youngest daughter (*ka-khaddoh*), her husband and daughters. It takes an

[Should read: permanent.— Analyst]

14:Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

Blei na thian, ko Lei Synshar, Ko Blei triw, man briw, kumba la hukum kumba bhu ma phi U Blei ka Blei ban long I Kha I man, kumba la pynhiar ka synjat mynta ka sgni, ba phin tip, ba phin sngew na jrong ho kyndiang ba ita I jaid bad ita I jaid ki la iapoi kha poi man ban iaroi ban ia man ban ia heh ka long kynthei ka long shynrang', Oh God from above, oh God from below, Thou God who controllest, who keepest and preservest, Thou God who createst man and the origin and source of human life,—as ordained by Thee, Oh God, U Blei (God in the male aspect), Ka Blei (God in the female aspect) that there should be *I Kha* (person to bear and give birth) *I man* (person with whom and through whom to give cause to life and to grow), as token has been brought down this day, [a ring is given], so that Thou mayest hear clearly from above, that such and such *jaid* (kind, clan) and such and such a *jaid* (kind, clan) have become joined in marriage in order to increase, in order to grow, so as to increase the state of being female and the state of being male (i. e. male and female population)." [This is said as a woman of a certain clan always marries a man of a different clan.] As I have said elsewhere, "There is no tradition among the Khasis that there was ever a time when the status of marriage did not exist among our ancestors. There is a belief among the Khasis that they were instructed in their religion and that their ceremonies and rites were delivered by God Himself to the

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581 [773] *Hynniew Trep Hynniew Sknm* (the seven nests, seven roots), These seven nests or roots were seven pairs of virgin women and men created by God to marry and they formed seven houses (families) and from them the country was filled and the rites and ceremonies were obtained. Thus the Khasi takes pride in the fact that God Himself delivered their religion and the rites and ceremonies unto them. ... The Khasi matrilineal system has come down through ages and with a definite idea of the union of one man with one woman. This is significant for those who consider that marriage is and has always been common to the whole human race, and it raises the question as to whether the Khasi idea is the survival of a period when the nature of paternity was not understood".

[851] [603] [553] In the sacred rites of baptism of this simple folk we find that a Khasi grandmother will not officiate in the name-giving ceremony unless in the marriage of her son with the woman to whom the child is born there has been the regular ceremony of marriage.

also active, and in that decade one U Kyrhai, a Khasi convert to Presbyterianism, left that church and founded a unique sect that blends something of himself with something of mystical Hinduism and Christianity. The competitors who most seriously threatened the dominance of the Welsh Presbyterians were the Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in Shillong about 1890. Catholics have since opened a number of high schools, colleges, convents, and orphanages. They also established a technical school, and are now constructing a seminary. At the present time, one estimate is that there are about 100,000 Presbyterians and 80,000 Roman Catholics among Khasis. Members of other Christian sects are comparatively few; adherents to Hinduism and Islam are fewer still, comprised chiefly of Khasi women married to Hindu or Muslim men; U Kyrhai's sect is dying out; and the balance of Khasis are, according to their own term, "Khasi" in religion. [Cf. Lyngdoh 1937; Morris 1910; Ropmay 1940; Singh 1950; Pugh 1951.] **Supernaturals.** The great deities are two, an unnamed masculine God (U Blei) and an unnamed feminine Goddess (Ka Blei Nongsynshar Nonghukum). God created the earth, and in the beginning instructed man in cultivation techniques and also laid down the framework of a moral order that should guide his every move if he wished to join God in heaven after death. This framework was then filled in by the first ancestors, who are therefore the authorities on the subject and are semideified as Ka Iawbei (the mother), U Thawlang (the father), and U Suidñia (the mother's brother). Very early, Goddess undertook to keep account of the numbers of human beings on earth, and this role was so important, relating as it did to the health and the multiplication of the people, that she became of major importance in the Khasi pantheon. When sin beset human society, God activated automatic punishments in the form of natural calamities, and man finally decided that some animal should go and intercede with God on behalf of humans. The cock went, agreed to take upon himself the burden of human sin, and received instruction in the correct divinatory and sacrificial techniques for which he would be one of the main objects of the knife. Again, over a period of time, it was the ancestors who perfected these techniques. Now, God is regarded as powerful and merciful, but passive. His punishments have their own impetus, and the expression of His mercy is solidified in ritual. Goddess is more vaguely conceived, but is much closer to the individual. [But cf. Ehrenfels 1950, who conceives of one double-sexed, great deity among Khasis.] Regarding ancestors, it is never clear from prayers whether supplication is to generalized semideities or to particular first ancestors of a Khasi's own matrilineage, and such a distinction seems not to matter. There are three other categories of minor deities: those who protect places (such as villages, groves, or springs),

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